

Brookline Preservation Commission Demolition Application Report

Address: 255 Clark Road

Petitioner: James and Susan Schuh

Building types: house and garage

National Register Listing (if Applicable): n/a



Historical/Architectural Significance:

There are two 1919 building permit applications for the house at 255 Clark Road. One was submitted by the Sawyer Construction Co. in August for a 2 and 1/2 story wood frame house, to be 35 feet in height, designed by the firm of Dow, Harlow and Kimbell. The house as built was permitted in September as a two story, 25 feet high, for owner John T. Bird of Wollaston. The designer was listed as the Montgomery Ward Company, making this a rare documented example in Brookline of a kit, or mail order house. For \$9,000 a 'ready-cut' kit of all construction materials needed, except for brick, concrete, or other foundation material, and interior finishes, was supplied by the mail order company and delivered by rail.

The garage, in a Dutch Colonial style with a tall gambrel roof, was built in 1921 for \$900 for owner Katherine Marston, who evidently purchased the house from Mr. Bird. Also in 1921, a 10 x 20 foot veranda was added to the house. Both were designed and built by S. Bertram Marston, presumably a relative of Katherine.

255 Clark Rd
June 2014

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According to the website <Antique home style> [<http://antiquehomestyle.com/plans/montgomery-ward/index.htm>] :

“Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of knowledge about the history of Montgomery Ward's kit home business. Like a number of similar companies, they began selling materials, lumber, hardware, and plans before World War I. By 1922, they began selling under the Wardway name and were closely affiliated with the Gordon Van Tine Company, which manufactured their homes for them. Many of their homes are identical to those offered by Gordon Van Tine.

The Wardway "ready-cut" kits were sold until 1931. The Depression years took their toll. Much of the profit in the kit home business came from the mortgage financing that accompanied the sale, not the materials or the house itself. According to the research conducted by Dale Wolicki, an architectural

historian and expert on Gordon Van Tine, New Deal mortgage programs through the Federal Housing Administration allowed home owners to refinance existing mortgages at a lower rate. By paying off their Montgomery Ward contracts, homeowners effectively cut the profits that allowed the company to pursue the business. Though other manufacturers were able to survive, Montgomery Ward terminated their kit home business as a result.”





1921 garage

The gambrel-roofed 'Dutch Colonial' style was a popular model kit-house of the 1920s, especially along the east coast. Sears and Montgomery Ward, both based in Chicago, advertised various versions of it, as did Gordon-Van Tine and Honor-Bilt.

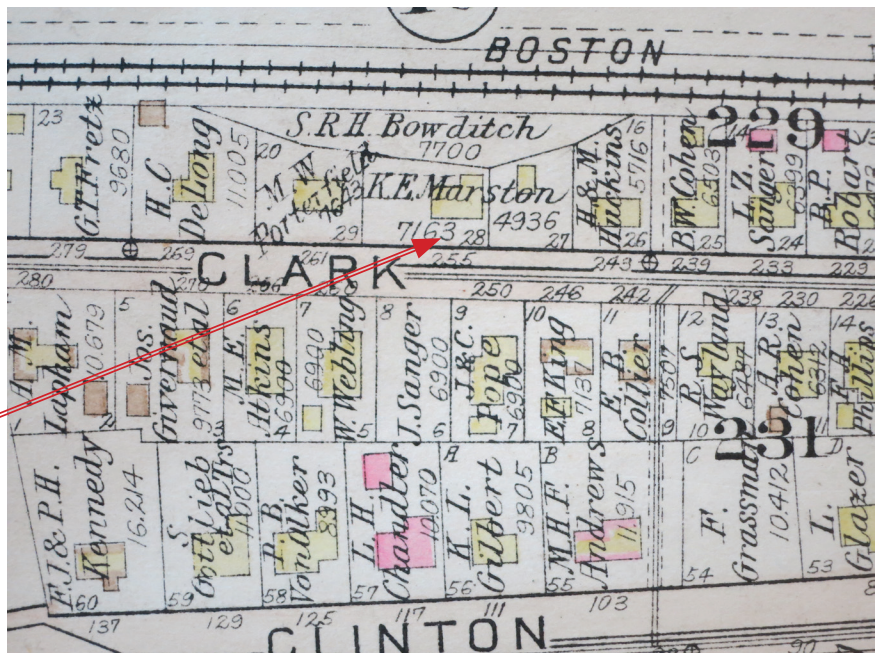
In catalogues the model was called the 'Lexington' or the 'Martha Washington.'

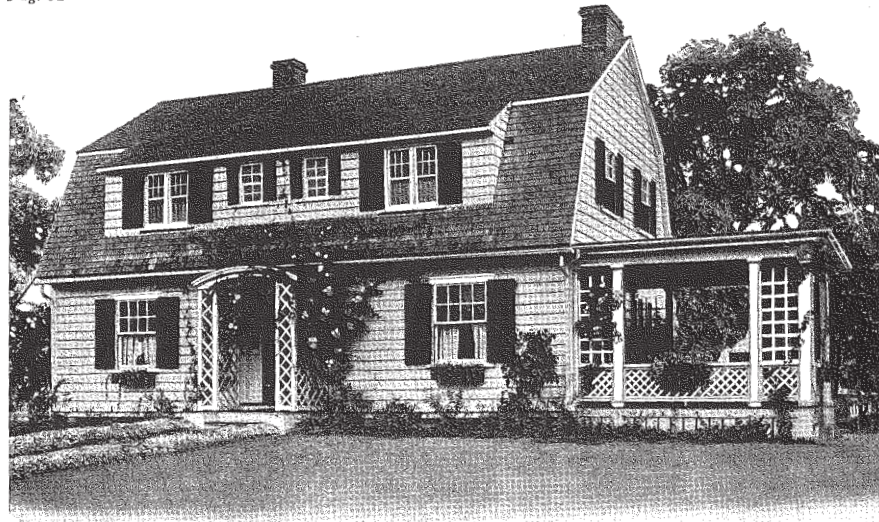
H.S. and A.S. Vincent owned the property during the 1930s. In 1941, architect Saul Moffie designed mostly interior modifications to the house for owner

Alan Shacter. The enclosed sunroom on the west side of the house was likely to have been added during these renovations, and the windows may also have been enlarged.

The Montgomery Ward Company was founded by Aaron Montgomery Ward in 1872 as a dry goods mail-order business. The headquarters were located in Chicago, Illinois. The company sold kit houses from c. 1910 until 1931.

255 Clark Road
from the *Brookline atlas* -
detail showing the Boston RR
line, Clark and Clinton Roads





Gordon-Van Tine Home No. 607

From the Gordon-Van
Tine Co. catalogue

A Dutch Colonial Home of Rare Charm

For Prices on This Home, See First Page.
Read Pages 9 and 10 for Full Description of Materials.

SOME houses are just houses; others proclaim the fact that there is a home within. This home announces itself at first glance, and expresses the idea of cheer and hospitality. The entrance bespeaks a much warmer greeting than that given by the one time custom of carving "Welcome" over the house door.

The true Dutch Colonial gambrel roof, the shingled walls, shuttered windows, and wide porch make this one of the most charming of places. And you need never worry that the home of your neighbor will darken your rooms, when your house is built with the long walls facing the front and rear.

Each detail of this home has been planned by men and women of practical experience, who have kept every possibility for comfort and pleasing appearance in mind.

From the attractive stoop one enters a vestibule having a large coat closet to the left. This arrangement leaves the hall proper, free from drafts, unencumbered and usable as a part of the living room when so wanted. This hall space sets off the open stairway most splendidly also.

A large fireplace occupies the center of the outside wall of the splendid living room, with French doors at the right of it, which lead to the comfortable living porch. The position of the porch at the side insures greater comfort and privacy.

Besides these French doors, there are in the living room, three large Colonial windows of the type found throughout the downstairs.

The dining room is equally well lighted, carefully planned and cheerful.

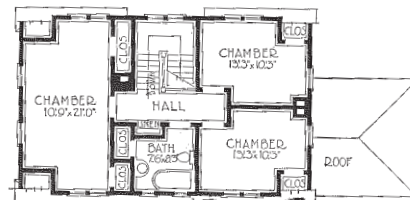
It is of a size suited to the needs of this house.

The kitchen is a representative Gordon-Van Tine kitchen, well arranged with our special built-in kitchen case, design "D" (see color pages) and even a built-in broom closet. Three steps bring one down to the space for the refrigerator and the rear grade door, where the ice man can enter.

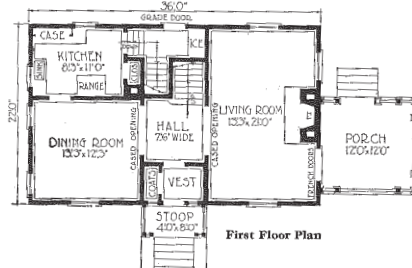
Upstairs are the bath, linen closet and three chambers, besides the hall which is well lighted by the windows on the stair landing. The bathroom as well as bedroom has unusual closet space. All the upstairs ceiling heights are eight feet in the clear.

You, of course, will build a basement under the entire house. Our blue prints provide for it and we furnish enough windows to give proper light and ventilation.

All lattice necessary to construct porches as shown is furnished. A mantel shelf, ash trap and damper are furnished for fireplace.



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

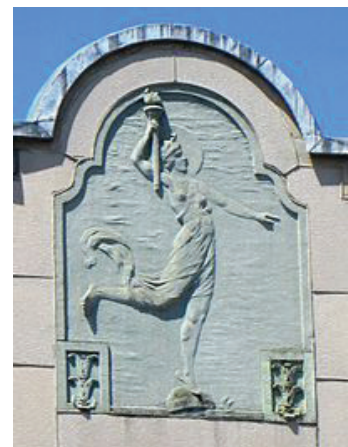
PAINT—Unless otherwise instructed we will furnish silver gray shingle stain for wall shingles, white paint for trim and green paint for blinds. We do not furnish stain for roof shingles.

For Plumbing, Heating, Lighting for This Home, See Back of Book

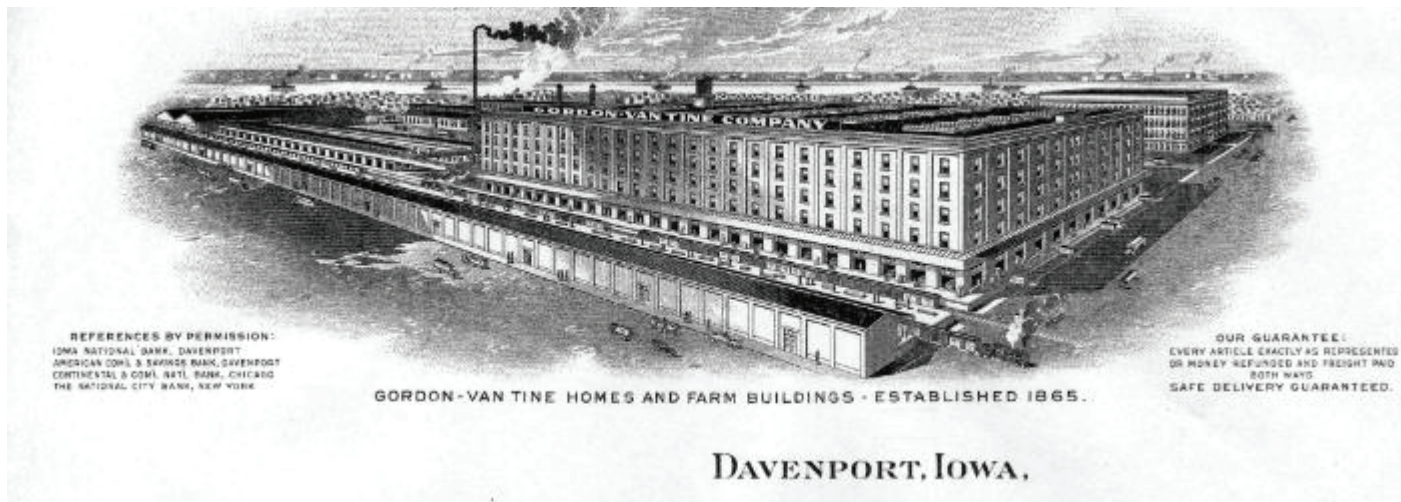


255 Clark Road

Montgomery Ward Co.'s emblem depicting 'prograss lighting the way for commerce'



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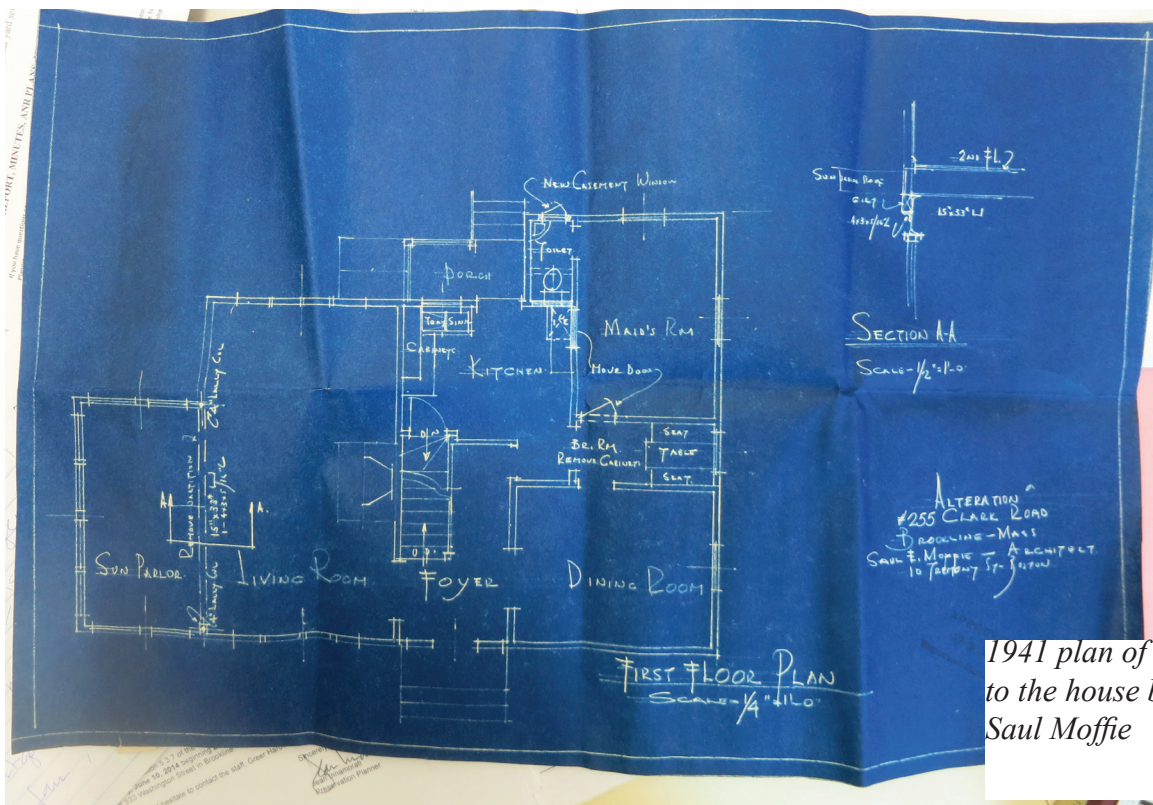


The house and garage at 255 Clark Road meet the following criterion for an initial determination of significance:

c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the Town or Commonwealth; and

d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group.

The house and garage retain their integrity in terms of their location setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. More research is needed to determine the addresses of other Montgomery Ward, Godon-Van Tine and Sears kit homes in Brookline and the surrounding area.



1941 plan of modifications to the house by architect Saul Moffitt